

A Firebug Who Was Able to Give His Customers References

Frank S. Lighton, Was Trapped in the Act of Starting a Fire, Was an Expert

STRICTLY among friends he was known as "Frank the Firebug." Just a pet name—nothing official about it. Still, in his own home town some of the police force had the playful habit of offering him matches as they passed him on the street and urging jovially:

"Here, Frank, go start a fire."

Professionally Frank S. Lighton was an arson expert, an arch incendiary who could give references from any number of satisfied clients. His specialty was the igniting end of the job. According to his own account, there weren't any better arson men in the business. With his secret medicine he could fire a whole city block in five minutes and no one would be the wiser.

A Money-Back Guaranty

"A guaranty with every job, or your money back," was his terse way of expressing it.

Twice before he has been arrested for incendiary ambitions, once for arson and once for attempted arson. But both times the cases were non-plussed or nolle-prossed, or whatever it is that happens in court when nothing happens.

Then he planned something really big—the burning of a chemical factory over in northern New Jersey that had fallen into disuse. All he wanted was 3 per cent of the total gate receipts when the insurance policy had been cashed in, or, if that seemed excessive, he was willing to accept a flat \$200 and expenses.

With the Match Lighted

Audaciously, and with every bit of the skill he had credited to himself, he advanced the project up to the point of applying the match, when suddenly he discovered that most of his alleged accomplices were regular detectives with real badges.

Now Frank Lighton is sitting in a lonesome cell in the Hackensack jail thinking things over.

A few weeks ago the Butterworth-Judson Company, of Lyndhurst, N. J., received the following letter:

Superintendent.

Dear Sir: I wish to communicate with you in a secret way. If my questions are not agreeable with your views and desires, I wish and ask you to answer me no and forget everything.

The works at Lyndhurst, N. J., owned by your company, are closed and idle; your expenses no doubt are high in engaging two watchmen and paying them their wages for which you have no returns or gains.

I wish to ask you if you have the said building insured high enough that would pay you well enough and stop paying the necessary expenses by having same sold as I call it (in the air).

Should you agree to this please let me know and I know we will close to satisfactory terms, etc. But, as I said before, if you should not agree to this plan, then please answer no and say nothing more about it. Hoping to hear from you soon. Respectfully,

FRANK S. LIGHTON.

467 Henderson Street, Jersey City, N. J.

The Butterworth-Judson Company had a factory in Lyndhurst. It had been used during the war as a chemical plant, turning out government orders. Lately they have had little use for the place and were preparing to dismantle it. However, Lighton's proposal didn't quite fit in with their schedule.

Detectives on the Case

Instead of complying with the request to "answer me no and forget everything," they notified the National Board of Fire Underwriters, who immediately placed Henry J.

Sloan, chief of the arson bureau, in charge of the case.

Posing as a member of the Butterworth-Judson firm, Mr. Sloan established communication with Lighton. After a series of letters had passed between the two a conference was arranged for the evening:

When Lighton arrived he presented hardly the type expected of one who practiced the daring trade of an arson expert. A mild-mannered man, past middle age, with his hair just beginning to thin on the top of his head, he was of a robust, stocky build, smooth shaven, heavy features, red nosed, slovenly. From his battered old gray suit and cracked shoes it was apparent that he had not profited extensively in his business.

Not the Villain Type

Seated opposite the reputed manufacturer, with the formal introductions out of the way, his first question was about the insurance policy.

"I never touch a job until I read the policy," he explained.

Sloan assured him that the policy was in first class condition. After a considerable discussion of finances it was agreed that Lighton was to receive \$200, half down and the balance when the job was completed.

Also, the company assumed responsibility for all expenses, which Lighton thought would not pass \$50, besides the money that was to be paid to the watchman as a bribe.

Asked for References

At a second conference, held the next afternoon in the same room, Sloan pretended that his firm was dissatisfied with Lighton's qualifications for the delicate job. Lighton promptly grew expansive as to his talents.

He boasted of thirty or forty fires in northern New Jersey for which he was personally responsible. He

would put in his word. At half-past 12 I began to think I would give it up. I hazarded a word about Bruozzi and asked if my teacher thought he would be in the next morning. "Bruozzi?" asked the man in the armchair. "Why, here he is." He made a brusque gesture to the group around our chairs, indicating a young man whom I vaguely remembered as having hovered around us, coming and going in intervals of five minutes for the past half hour.

Bruozzi smiled with all his teeth. I could scarcely resist a cry of triumph.

An Editor With Leisure

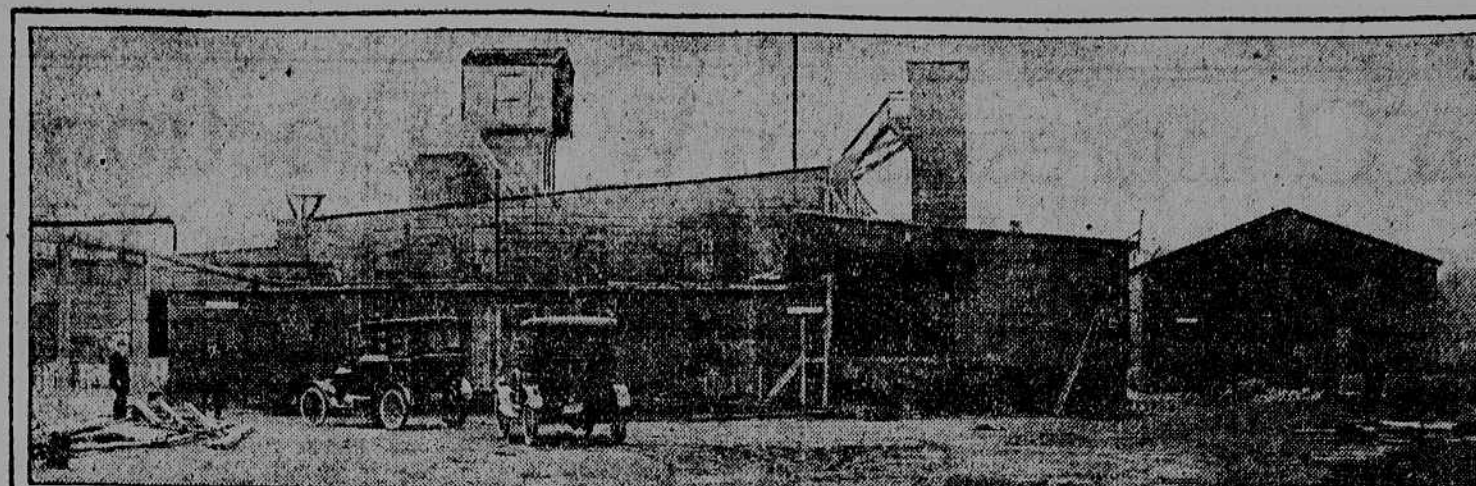
An hour passed by. The editor in his armchair seemed to have little to do that night. As he developed his thesis of the "complete, sudden and violent" reformation of the world, according to the edicts and decisions of the Third International, sounds of disputes came from the room alongside. The Communist brethren seemed to be coming to blows, but the editor never turned his head. The struggle died away. Another hour passed, and still the man in the black ribbon tie, with a beard like Lenin's, held on his Communicative way. Collaborators came and went. We were always surrounded by a little group, who listened quietly to the man with the tie. Occasionally one of them

Brano Bruozzi

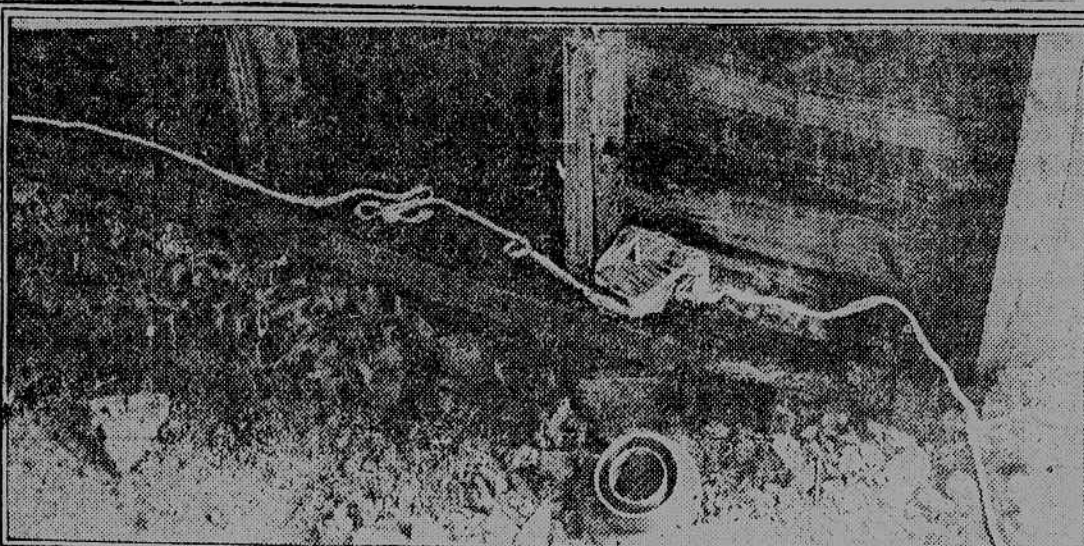
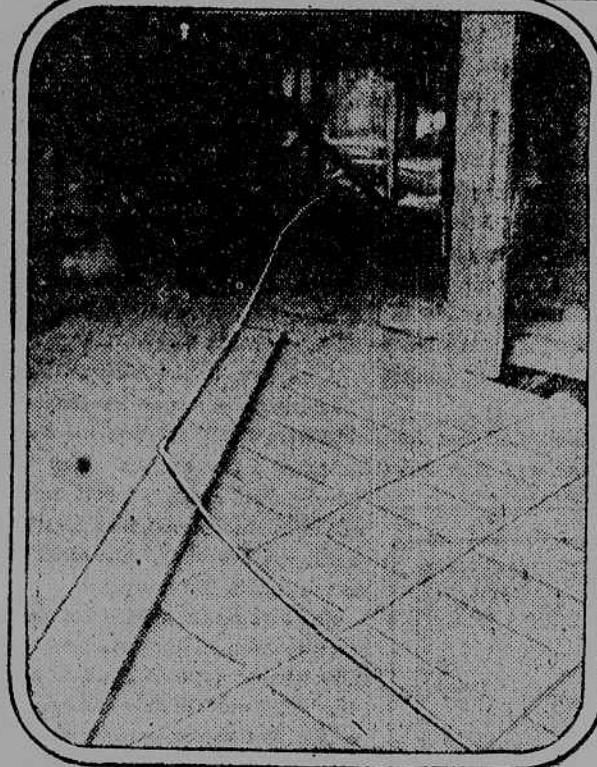
He is a young man, about thirty or a little less; of middle height, shabbily dressed in a gray tweed suit. If you looked at his hands first of all you would put him down as a wrestler or an acrobat—large, fleshy hands that are obviously very strong, which he shoots out in argument or greeting as if he were striving for an "opening." They are not the hands of a manual worker, but of a professional strong man. When he pushes them out suddenly and abruptly in a

characteristic gesture his arms stiffen, and he instinctively places his feet wider apart. An anthropologist would class him without hesitation among the "race with the short, round heads," which it was the fashion before the war to say were the coming conquerors of the modern world. He has short, frizzy, black hair, and in his black, audacious eyes the look of one who seeks danger in sheer high spirits. His nose is short and snubbed. Every time I have seen him he has been smiling in the same way, the smile of the confident boy, who enjoys the fun of life, the amusement of succeeding, and the exquisite taste of power and success. Murat, the pastry cook of Marseilles, must have looked like Bruozzi, a vigorous, audacious Southern man. Without those tenacious hands, swift to clutch but strong to hold, those eyes might have made Bruozzi the first commercial traveler on the Italian road, or a bandit, a highwayman. As it is, he is the coming force of labor in Italy, the man who made the Italian revolution.

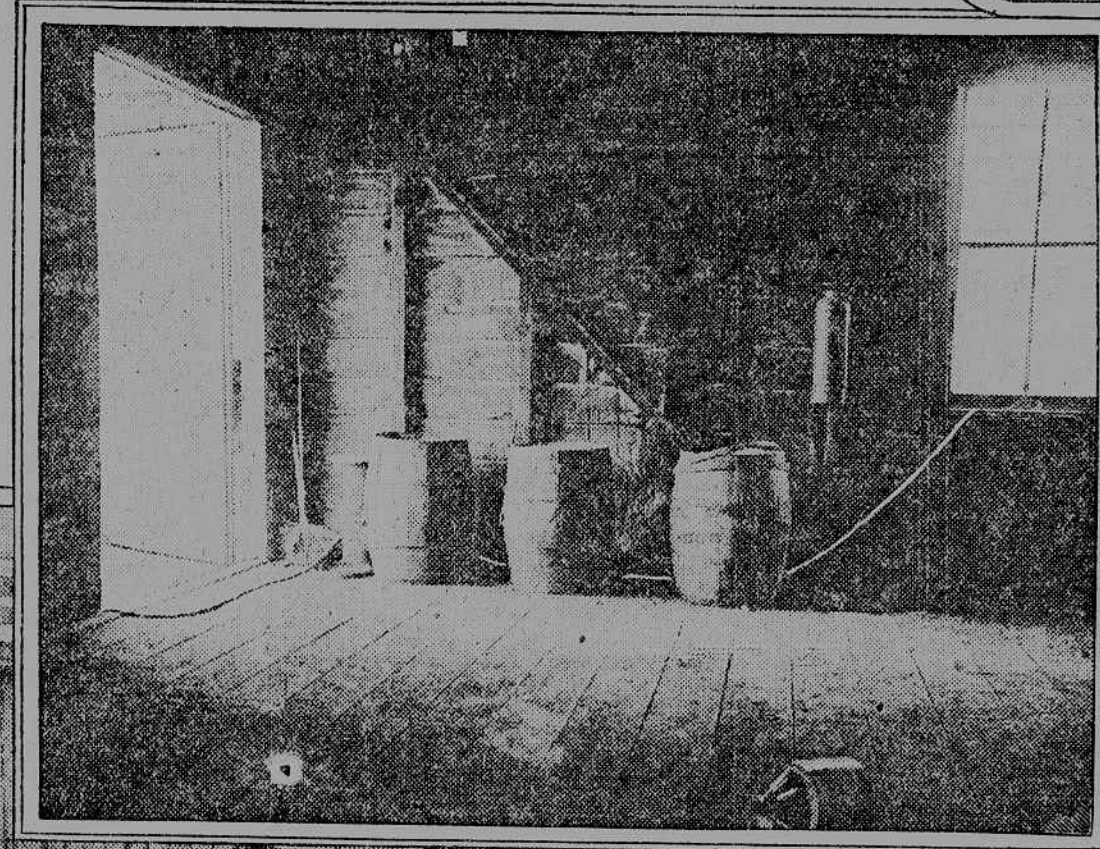
His bosom friend and the enemy of



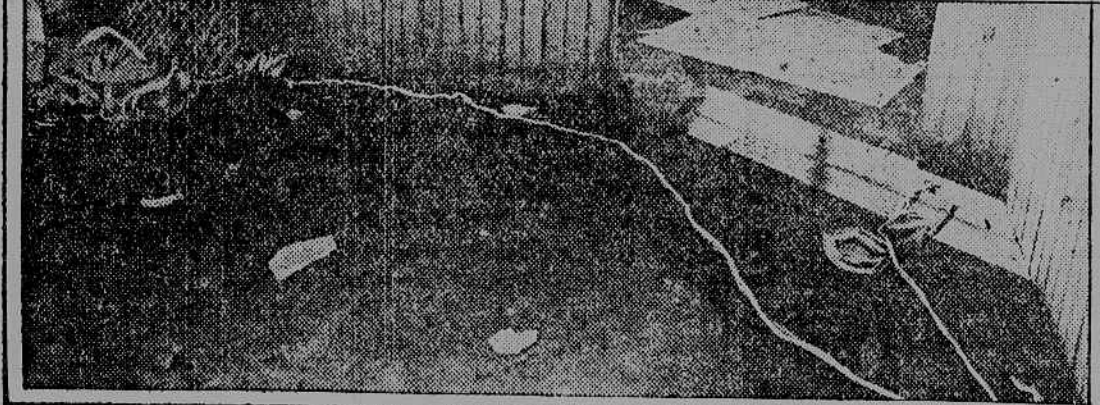
THE chemical plant of the Butterworth-Judson Company at Lyndhurst, N. J., which Lighton offered to burn for a share of the insurance



THIS is the point at which the fire was to be started. When the birthday candle burned down to the paper the fuse would be ignited



BARRELS filled with rubbish were in the line of the creeping spark



NOTE how the fuse led up to the filled waste basket

details of the plan were agreed upon and the date set.

At this point Sloan decided to notify Prosecutor A. C. Hart of Bergen County. Prosecutor Hart took

personal charge of setting the trap and assigned County Detectives Taylor and Valuzzi to the case. As the investigators feared that Lighton might advance his schedule and set the fire when they were not present, constant watch was kept on the plant.

According to their testimony,

His Proposition to Burn a Dismantled War Plant Revealed an Extensive Arson Business

Underwriters, whom he introduced to Lighton as a corrupt plainclothes man of the Jersey City police force. Lighton appeared satisfied and permitted the two men to accompany him while he collected his materials.

A Firebug's Tools

At a hardware store Lighton pur-

chased several balls of wicking, such as miners use. At a Pacific Avenue address he picked up two jugs and a half gallon can. Later, when they reached Lyndhurst, he went down in the basement of a house and came up with a five-gallon can. Two more five-gallon cans were procured at a garage.

The party arrived at the factory about midnight. The Lyndhurst plant of the Butterworth-Judson Company is an extensive affair, occupying a series of low, rambling frame buildings, inclosed by a wooden picket fence. One side faces the banks of the Hackensack River.

Here Mr. Sloan can give a fairly detailed account of the story.

"When we landed at the gate the factory could be dimly seen in the darkness," said Mr. Sloan. "The deserted neighborhood and the hour seemed to be well adapted for the plan. We found the watchman waiting for us.

Powerful Medicine

"Lighton had been boasting about the efficiency of the secret preparation which he called medicine. He mixed some of it in a bucket, using a combination of materials from the various cans and bottles. He gave a demonstration with a short piece of wicking on the concrete floor. It made good his claims, because I tried to stamp it out and couldn't."

"Then it was interesting to see the professional way in which Lighton and the watchman went to work in preparing for the fire. Hundreds of feet of soaked wicking was used. A trail was taken from room to room and from building to building. Carefully planned lighting points were arranged. The walls were drenched with gasoline and

gasoline was even poured over the gas meters so that the fire would cause an explosion to complete the destruction.

"All of this consumed three or four hours, so thorough and workmanlike was the process. Working there in the dark, it was hard to believe that these men were engaged in a perfectly matter-of-fact way in committing an extensive crime and that I was apparently assisting them.

"Finally all preparations were complete, and we returned to the engine room, which had been fixed as the point of lighting. Gillice, the supposedly crooked detective, was with us. By this time he stood high in Lighton's confidence.

The Time to Act

"We stood two to two, but our reserves, the county detectives, were hiding behind the fence. I had been talking loudly enough so that the outside watchers could keep track of our movements. They knew as well as we that the time had come for action.

"Now, you fellows had better run," said Lighton, as he took a watch from his pocket and stepped over to the wicking.

"This was the signal for the attack. The reinforcements poured in, and after a short struggle the incendiaries were overpowered and in the hands of the county detectives."

The original plan had been to allow Lighton to start the fire. Extinguishers and water had been concealed ready for immediate use. But when it was seen that a spark from a single match might set the whole factory in a blaze the detectives decided to take no chances.

Upon investigation by Prosecutor Hart's office, it was discovered that Lighton is an old friend of the police. In the Rogues Gallery he is known familiarly as No. 242. Under various aliases—Frank Keat, Frank Leighton, Frank Clapton, Frank Swadik, Frank Kurachelle—his police record shows that he has been before the court frequently and has served several sentences.

A Disillusioned Man

Visited in the Hackensack jail, Lighton was still cheerful, but showed plainly that he has lost all faith in human nature.

"How do I know you are a newspaper man?" he asked the correspondent. "Since that man Sloan fooled me I don't believe anything or anybody."

Modestly he protested that he wished to claim no distinction for being the inventor of a secret medicine that could sell things "in the air." He felt that he had overstated the case in his conference with Sloan.

"Nothing but gasoline, kerosene and a little oil," he described the ingredients of his compound. His enthusiasm had run away with him in his eagerness to get the job. Really, he was only boasting about being such a celebrated arson expert.

Lighton's one complaint about the whole affair rests on the Butterworth-Judson Company's failure to treat his suggestion in the spirit in which it was intended.

"I told them to answer me 'no' and forget everything," he whined. "And they didn't."

An Interview With Bruozzi, Leader of the Labor Uprising in Italy

THE fighting points of the industrial revolution that today holds Italy in its clutches are the Metal Workers' Union and the Peasants or Land Workers. Each of these trade unions, writes a special correspondent just back from Italy, in The Manchester Guardian, is strong and led by a remarkable personality, the first by a young man and the second by a woman in late middle age. Bruno Bruozzi and Signora Argentina Altobelli are two people of whom the outside world knows little. Both are worth knowing.

Bruozzi I saw for the first time in the offices of the official Socialist paper (Communist) Avanti. He is a difficult person to find, for he loves movement. He can never stay for more than an hour in any one of the multiple offices in which he does his work. People made a gesture of despair when I asked, successively, at the Camera del Lavoro, the Confederation of Trade Unions, the offices of the Metal Workers, where he might be caught. To judge from those expressive shoulders one might

when she comes in. Not that she is severe, or a wet blanket. I did not meet one sad or serious-faced person in the whole of the labor movement. They go in Italy rather to the theatrical side, to be laughed at and shouted at by the Bruozzis. She is a broad-shouldered woman dressed in a black silk gown, her hair beginning to turn gray. A stout old lady. Her voice I cannot with justice criticize. I remember that she was speaking to a foreigner, and international tradition has it that one must always shout to be understood by such. Certainly she spoke very loudly, as if she was addressing a public meeting of one. She has addressed public meetings all her life, this old lady with shrewd, large black eyes. She began when she was eighteen, she told me, when on a visit to the country. She must have been a teacher, I fancy. No one else was doing the work in those days. The contadini, the peasants, were in a bad way, as the French peasants were before their revolution. They were just day laborers.

No one owned his land. In the

south they earned sixpence or sevenpence a day. They did not work all the year, and in the end they fled and emigrated to America. One thinks of a peasant as a man who rears a large family in a little picturesque cottage in the country. The Italian peasant, when Signora Argentina appeared on the scene, lived in a slum, in a town or village, and went to work every morning (if he was lucky enough to find employment) for a fixed wage.

Taught Peasants to Read

So, even after she married, with a friend of Carducci she continued to visit the contadini and teach them to read and write and that they were unjustly treated. They were for years inclined to disbelieve this and put it down to the anger of God. She tried to get them to form little groups of ten to twelve to meet together. They would not for a long time. This year the membership of her Land Workers' Trade Union is 900,000. Such is the life of Altobelli.

The Signora

"Is he sincere?" is the first question one asks about a Communist, instinct telling us that it is not so much a political creed as a religion, a fanaticism, a faith. It is a question which Bruozzi would never put to himself. His is not the nature to be worried by religious doubts. I am sure he has never even thought about the question. He is enormously ambitious and greedy for power, for the cheers of the multitude, for practical things, for results.

General of the other wing, one has to go to Bologna. She is easier to find than Bruozzi, for she is nearly sixty. Her clerks call her the Signora. and stop chattering and laughing